CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-SIXTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 5 June 1997, at 12.15 p.m.

President: Mr. Dia (Senegal)

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The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I declare open the 766th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

First of all, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf I wish to extend a warm welcome to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, His Excellency Mr. Evgeny Primakov, who will be our first speaker. I do not believe it necessary to dwell on the personality and career of Mr. Primakov, who has occupied the post of Foreign Minister since January 1996. Suffice it to say that the Minister is a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, that from 1977 to 1985 he directed the Institute of Eastern Sciences of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, and also to recall that he occupied the very important functions of President of the Soviet of the Union of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and member of the Security Council of the Soviet Union. His presence among us today testifies to the personal interest he attaches to our work and the importance that his Government continues to attach to the Conference on Disarmament. I am sure that we will all follow his statement with great interest.

Besides the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, I have on the list of speakers today the representatives of Turkey and Belgium. I invite the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, His Excellency Mr. Evgeny Primakov, to take the floor.

Mr. PRIMAKOV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): Allow me first of all, Mr. President, to congratulate you on taking up the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament and to convey to you as the representative of a friendly country, Senegal, our best wishes for the successful discharge of your responsible task. I would also like to convey greetings to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, with whom I have enjoyed personal contacts and friendship for many years. I thank Mr. Petrovsky and his deputy, Mr. Bensmail, for their efforts to ensure the smooth operation of the Conference on Disarmament.

I would like to begin my address on an optimistic note. We have all observed with enthusiasm the major shifts which, if the positive trend continues, are capable of leading to real international stabilization. Today we can say with assurance that such a possibility really does exist. I would cite the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between the Russian Federation and NATO signed at the Paris summit as one of these important shifts which have taken place recently. Its substance reflected the political will of the leaders of the largest nations in Europe and America to take into account each other's security and cooperation interests for the sake of stability in the world. In fact, this has happened for the first time on such a scale since the end of the "cold war".

This agreement was difficult to reach. I will be quite frank about that. Russia, as you know, has had, and still has, an extremely unfavourable attitude to the enlargement of NATO, believing that it can create new lines of division in Europe, which we had started to move away from rather emphatically during the period following the "cold war". It was for the very purpose of minimizing the negative effects of such an enlargement that Russia decided to sign the Founding Act. We will hope that the practical implementation of the

(Mr. Primakov, Russian Federation)

principles and the "code of conduct" laid down in the Act will help to enhance security in Europe. We will be able to ascertain in the near future that our optimism is well founded. I have in mind the negotiations in Vienna to adapt the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe to the new post-confrontation environment in Europe. This adaptation should take place in such a way as to strengthen the security of the States parties regardless of whether they are members of military-political alliances.

European security is our most important priority, but not the only one. I cannot fail to mention a major achievement in a different region - the agreement on mutual armed forces reduction along the border between China, Russia, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The agreement sets ceilings for ground forces and combat and defensive aircraft within a 100-kilometre zone on both sides of these borders. The value of this agreement lies not only in the fact that it covers a border of truly enormous length. It creates a model for solving border issues, which are often so sensitive in the Asia-Pacific region.

And finally - this is the last of the positive shifts I would like to speak about loud and clear today before you, but it is by no means the least significant. The world community has achieved significant progress in the resolution of major stabilization problems at the global level. I refer to the outcome of the meeting between the President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin, and United States President Bill Clinton held in March this year in Helsinki. The Presidents did not merely and not simply confirm their commitment to nuclear risk reduction and the strengthening of strategic stability. They clearly outlined the path towards further reductions in strategic offensive arms. It was agreed that Russia and the United States will embark on negotiations for the START-3 agreement immediately after the START-2 Treaty enters into force. The goal is jointly to ensure that as early as the coming decade the nuclear arsenals of Russia and the United States will be reduced to about a fifth of their size during the "cold war".

This decision links up the ongoing processes in nuclear arms reduction with real prospects of progress in this area - in other words, it links up today and tomorrow. As you know, obligations under the START-1 Treaty are being implemented according to plan and ahead of schedule, in a process involving the United States, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakstan alongside Russia. The next agreement between Russia and the United States of America, on reducing strategic arms by practically half - START-2 - is before the State Duma of the Russian Federation for consideration. We, that is the Russian Foreign Ministry, are striving for the ratification of this Treaty. The achievement of a substantive agreement with the United States to avoid the circumvention of the ABM Treaty will undoubtedly bring us closer to the entry into force of the START-2 Treaty. And this will, as is now clear, ensure the continuity of the process of nuclear arms reduction.

But whatever the importance of progress in reducing the nuclear arsenals of the two major nuclear-weapon States, this, as you can well understand, does not provide a complete solution to the problem of movement by all the nuclear States towards nuclear disarmament. I invite you to agree that the outcome of the Helsinki talks should give an impetus to "systematic" progress in this

(Mr. Primakov, Russian Federation)

field, for which many States call, inter alia, at your Conference on Disarmament. In this connection, I would like to dwell particularly on the important problem of reducing the area in which nuclear weapons are located. Acting together with its Belarusian, Kazak and Ukrainian friends, Russia has secured the withdrawal to its territory of all nuclear weapons left over after the disintegration of the USSR. The President of the Russian Federation has put forward the idea that all - and let me stress this word, all - nuclear States should keep their nuclear weapons only on their own territory. This step would objectively promote further strengthening of stability in the nuclear sphere.

Moreover, Russia firmly supports the growing process of establishing nuclear-free zones in different parts of the world: in Latin America and the South Pacific, followed by Africa and South-East Asia. I take this opportunity to reiterate our support for the idea of our Belarusian and Ukrainian friends to give Central and Eastern Europe the status of a nuclear-free zone. I note that arrangements for the establishment of nuclear-free zones in various parts of the world have gone a long way towards achieving one of the goals which the non-nuclear countries have been pursuing for many years - the provision of assurances concerning the non-use of nuclear weapons (what are known as "negative" assurances). It is known that in various statements Russia and other nuclear countries have provided certain assurances to this effect addressed to the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In addition, the mechanism of nuclear-free zones has established an entire system of agreements which also provide, in a regional context, of course, for assurances set forth in specific legal instruments. Such assurances already cover more than 90 States, and as the number of nuclear-free zones increases, this figure will grow further. We are ready to promote such processes.

It can safely be said that the above-mentioned initiatives and solutions, as well as many other breakthroughs, have not been generated and developed in a vacuum. A solid basis, or at least an atmosphere conducive to their adoption, has been and is being provided by your forum. I would like to note a major success of the Conference on Disarmament, the preparation of the global Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. It paved the way for the first time in history for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. The Convention has entered into force and is reaching the stage of practical implementation. The Russian Federation is committed to the goal of the prohibition and elimination of chemical weapons worldwide. The President of the Russian Federation has submitted the Convention to the State Duma for ratification. Russian deputies have already expressed their intention of completing the process of ratifying the Convention before the end of this year, specifically this autumn.

In 1996, your forum concluded the next historic stage in its work - the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty was signed. That means that one of the priority tasks in the nuclear field is being solved. The Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty is a historic document which took almost 40 years to develop. Russia devoted great efforts to make that treaty possible. As early as 1986, we declared a moratorium on nuclear testing. We were later joined by other nuclear Powers. As a result, the treaty has not yet entered into force, but

nuclear testing sites have already fallen silent. The number of signatory States of the Treaty is impressive - more than 140. However, a number of countries have still not signed it. They include States which possess considerable technical potential in the nuclear sphere. Their signatures are especially crucial. We urge the leaders of those States to acknowledge their heavy responsibility and to sign this most important Treaty.

In my view, ensuring the continuous dynamic development of disarmament processes is a historic task. Any pause in this sphere, especially a protracted one, may turn into a setback. In this connection, it would not be an overstatement to say that one of the keys to future stability is to be found in the chamber of the Conference on Disarmament. We would like to see the Conference maintain and enhance its positive negotiating dynamic. This is extremely vital to address the task of steadily reducing resort to the use of force and establishing a stable, democratic world order.

As to the immediate tasks faced by your Conference, we believe that in the nuclear sphere this means a ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear devices. Russia is ready to begin negotiations speedily on this issue here - right here in this multilateral forum on disarmament. As you know, the Russian Federation and several other nuclear Powers have already unilaterally ceased production of nuclear explosives. It is important that the instrument to be drawn up by the Conference on Disarmament should impose a ban on production of such materials on a universal basis, with the participation of both nuclear and non-nuclear States. This would be an additional instrument to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its dimensions.

Another problem which can be actively discussed at the Conference is that of anti-personnel landmines. We share the concern of the international community about their irresponsible use. As early as December 1994, Russia introduced a three-year moratorium on the export of non-self-destructing and undetectable mines. We are considering the possibility of extending that moratorium, and I think a decision to that effect will be taken. We believe that the adoption of a new version Protocol II to the 1980 "Inhumane Weapons" Convention, the so-called "mines" Protocol, would be an important step. The main task now is to ensure the widest possible participation of States in that Protocol. We view the complete prohibition of anti-personnel landmines as a goal which would probably best be approached by means of a series of agreed time stages. With this goal in mind, it is necessary to continue negotiations and to do so specifically in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament. It has the necessary negotiating experience and comprises the main States concerned.

Here, with the participation of many experts in this hall, talks are also under way on the issue of verification of compliance with the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological Weapons. I would like to reiterate our firm intention to do all we can to promote the development of an effective and fair mechanism based on objective criteria.

In recent months the Conference on Disarmament has encountered difficulties in defining the organizational aspects of its further activities

Mr. Primakov, Russian Federation

after an exceptionally intensive period in its work, namely, the completion of negotiations on the CTBT. I would like to express the hope that the present situation will soon be overcome, since the Conference cannot and must not slacken its activities. We are ready to exchange views in order to agree upon realistic priorities, and to harmonize positions constructively on the whole range of issues on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. The Russian Federation will participate in the search for solutions which can ensure progress in the activities of the Conference and lead to further consolidation of its role as an important multilateral tool for strengthening global stability and security.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation for his important statement and for the kind words he addressed to the Chair. I now call on the representative of Turkey, Ambassador Olgucevik.

Mr. OLGUCEVIK (Turkey): Mr. President, in the absence of Ambassador Diallo, the current President of the Conference on Disarmament, I am pleased to take the floor while you are in the Chair as a representative of Senegal, with which Turkey enjoys friendly relations. I wish you every success and assure you of my delegation's support and cooperation. I wish also to pay tribute to the previous President of the CD, Ambassador Berdennikov of the Russian Federation, for his skilful efforts to achieve progress in the work of the Conference at a difficult juncture. Moreover, it gives me pleasure to extend a warm welcome to our new colleagues, Ambassador Giuseppe Balboni Acqua of Italy and Ambassador Gunther Seibert of Germany. I look forward to working with them constructively.

I should also like to state that I consider myself privileged, though as the result of a mere pleasant coincidence, to address the Conference at the same time as, in the same meeting with, and following the important statement of, His Excellency Mr. Evgeny Primakov, the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, with which Turkey enjoys friendly relations and mutually beneficial cooperation. Foreign Minister Primakov's presence today in this Conference and the inspiring speech which he has just delivered illustrates anew the vital leading role which the Russian Federation continues to play in the global nuclear and conventional disarmament process.

May I avail myself of this opportunity to reiterate my Government's satisfaction with the signing of the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation? It is no doubt the harbinger of a truly new era in international relations as we move towards the twenty-first century.

With its unique geopolitical position, situated at the crossroads of the East and the West, and the North and the South, together with its historical experience, the Republic of Turkey has always been compelled to attach primordial importance to security requirements. Yet, Turkey has always been, and still is, fully aware of the fact that arming cannot by itself guarantee a country's security. Improvement in international relations, as well as disarmament and arms control activities, forms a vital part of security. With

this awareness, parallel to its efforts to improve political relations and enlarge economic collaboration, Turkey has consistently supported all initiatives aimed at arms reductions and disarmament, treat during disarmament and arms control one of the major components of its foreign policy.

Turkey is committed to the established ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. We believe that this goal must be pursued with realism through a comprehensive and balanced approach encompassing meaningful steps relating to both nuclear and conventional arms. Success in disarmament and arms control initiatives depends, in the first instance, on the creation of a political atmosphere that inspires confidence. Any disarmament or arms control measure, to be effective, must provide for undiminished security for the countries concerned, without upsetting the global strategic balance. It must provide for adequate and appropriate verification. Greater transparency in defence issues is indispensable in order to avoid uncertainty and insecurity. The geopolitical characteristics of specific regions should be taken into account in assessing the consequences of any given disarmament measure.

It is undeniably true that disarmament negotiations cannot take place in a vacuum. They are inevitably affected by the evolution of the international situation and by all the factors related to international security. From this perspective we can confidently assert that the international situation surrounding the work of the CD in 1997 is no less favourable than it was when the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) were successfully negotiated and finalized.

The end of the cold war alone has created an environment in which major achievements in global disarmament and non-proliferation have been made possible.

The first half of 1997 has been marked with meaningful developments in the field of disarmament and arms control.

The CWC entered into force on 29 April. I have the pleasure of informing the Conference that Turkey completed the ratification process and deposited the instruments of ratification with the United Nations on 12 May 1997. We would like to urge other countries which have not yet done so to ratify the CWC as soon as possible. In this connection, we took note of the encouraging messages to the first meeting of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons from President Yeltsin of Russia and the Russian Duma. Turkey's statement by Foreign Minister Primakov before this body is reassuring in this regard.

Moreover, I should like to state that we are encouraged by the progress achieved so far by the Ad Hoc Group tasked with strengthening of the BWC and we hope that the rolling text can be tabled by the Chairman at an early date, ensuring more structured negotiations to commence in July 1997.

In the field of nuclear disarmament, the process establishing the CTBT Organization is fully under way.

(Mr. Ilkocevik, Turkey)

The first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 NPT Review Conference was held in April of this year. We welcome the joint statement made on that occasion by the five nuclear-weapon States expressing their determination to continue implementing fully all provisions of the Treaty, including those of article VI.

The summit meeting in Helsinki on 21 March 1997 between the Presidents of the Russian Federation and the United States was an important event affecting the disarmament and arms control environment positively. We welcome their agreement, among other things, setting out the basic components of START-3 negotiations.

It is against this background and under the prevailing propitious international climate that my delegation believes that it is high time for us to get down to concrete work before the end of the second session. Our success in achieving this will, to a large extent, depend on our ability to distinguish between the ideal and the feasible. Let us continue to aim at the ideal but let us also forge ahead with whatever is feasible.

It is true that the international community aspires to a world free from nuclear weapons. A global ban on nuclear weapons and their total elimination is the ultimate objective within the framework of general and complete disarmament. It goes without saying that the CD, as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, has an important role in further enhancing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation towards the ultimate objective. Yet as members of the CD, we should not lose sight of the realities of the international security environment. We should not make relatively or comparatively small but meaningful steps in the nuclear disarmament process a victim of overambitious expectations and approaches. My delegation is not convinced that a "blueprint" or a "timetable" for the achievement of the ultimate goal in nuclear disarmament would be more conducive to, or for that matter a viable alternative to, the existing bilateral reductions in nuclear arsenals. In our view, prompt ratification by the Russian Federation of START-2 and its implementation, and the negotiation of START-3, could successfully lead the way to a stage where the other nuclear powers could join the plurilateral process to rid the world of all nuclear weapons.

Having accomplished its work on the CTBT, the CD must continue to play its role in non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament by starting, without further delay, its overdue work on a treaty to prohibit the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, otherwise referred to as the "cut-off convention" (FMCT). In 1995, an agreement was reached in the CD on the establishment of an ad hoc committee on this particular subject. Its mandate was defined in the Shannon report (CD/1299). Therefore, I appeal to all members to support the implementation of the CD's earlier decision and thus establish an ad hoc committee and begin negotiations on an FMCT.

Mr. Ilgezdik, Turkey

We all recognize that nuclear disarmament is only one aspect of the general problem. Arms control and disarmament efforts require a comprehensive approach which should encompass conventional arms as well. In this category of weapons, anti-personnel landmines (APLs) has emerged as a topical issue which deserves attention and appropriate action in the CD.

In Turkey's view, the multidimensional issue of APLs entails the consideration of both the humanitarian and disarmament aspects. There are a number of ways to deal with the humanitarian aspect of the problem short of introducing a total ban on the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of APLs. To cite but a few of these: intensification of demining activities, provision of more demining assistance, victim rehabilitation and the development of demining and victim assistance expertise and technologies in mine-affected countries. Furthermore, declarations of moratoriums on the transfer of APLs should also be encouraged as an initial step in the right direction.

It is with these humanitarian considerations in mind that Turkey put into effect on 1st January 1996 a renewable three-year moratorium on the export and transfer of APLs, and is participating in mine clearance operations in the former Yugoslavia.

Less than a year ago, Protocol II of the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) was revised, as a result of which the permissible scope for the responsible and therefore legitimate use of APLs has been delineated. Thus, as a first immediate step, global adherence to the CCW and to its revised Protocol II should also be encouraged. At the same time, in order to alleviate the genuine concerns of many States which foresee the continued operational use of APLs, a number of issues should be identified and dealt with before initiating negotiations aimed at a global ban on APLs. The following questions, not in any way exhaustive, need to be addressed in all their aspects.

Firstly, if the use of APLs is to be banned, how will States protect their frontiers in the absence of a viable alternative, not only against unfriendly neighbours, but also against irregular armed formations which operate across borders and other criminal groups, including smugglers? As part of a solution, interested parties should promote the launching of a multinationally funded project to identify and develop technologies for cost-effective non-weapon alternatives to APLs. We would like to see countries that vigorously pursue the goal of a global ban to apply commensurate resources, political and financial, to such a joint undertaking.

Secondly, what measures will be taken to curb the indiscriminate and irresponsible use of APLs, mainly by terrorist groups, which is at the heart of this problem? In this respect, the problem needs to be addressed concurrently in its demand and supply aspects. Special attention should be paid to the transfer of APLs. We would like to draw attention to the amended Protocol II of the CCW, which has addressed this important element of the problem by introducing the rule that no mine should be transferred to any recipient other than a State or its agent or agencies.

(Mr. Ulucevik, Turkey)

Thirdly, what will be the elements of a verification regime that would be acceptable to all States, one which would be credible and at the same time strike a balance between effectiveness and intrusiveness? This is not a matter to be treated lightly, since our recent common experiences suggest that one of the most thorny areas of multilateral disarmament negotiations is to agree on a verification mechanism.

I believe it is abundantly clear from the foregoing demonstrative set of questions that issues related to the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines fall within the competence of the Conference on Disarmament. In our view, the CD has the necessary experience, expertise and standing to find the right answers to such questions.

We, therefore, invite delegations not to object to the appointment of a special coordinator to engage in consultations to determine the most appropriate arrangements to deal with the question of APLs.

As will be recalled, Turkey was one of the 10 countries who abstained in the vote at the fifty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly on resolution 51/45 S calling for an international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines. Turkey did so because of its overriding security concerns over such a global ban. In the view of the Turkish Government, absolute realism must prevail in working out an agreement on APLs, which must be of a universal nature providing for a phased approach towards the ultimate goal. A ban on transfers should constitute the first stage. We believe that our success on the issue of APLs will depend on our ability to reconcile the humanitarian concerns involved with those of security.

Turkey has always supported the concept of transparency in the military area. We consider that it is in itself a measure for building confidence that will reduce mistrust among States, both regionally and internationally. Transparency in armaments carries with it an idea of universality. It is, we believe, a question that is of interest to all countries.

With these considerations, my delegation calls upon the Conference actively to address the subject of "transparency in armaments", which is already an item on our agenda.

Turkey, in keeping with its policy of supporting initiatives to limit conventional weapons, applied for membership in the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) in 1992. I have today the pleasure of informing the Conference that on 25 April of this year, participating States of the MTCR invited Turkey to join this arrangement. Consequently, my country has started participating in regular meetings held in Paris.

On this occasion, I would like to touch briefly upon a worldwide phenomenon with dangerous consequences. Arms smuggling and illicit arms sales tend to destabilize the domestic political and social order of States and impair regional security. Nowadays a wave of cruel and blind terrorism endangers the social fabric of some States and the conduct of orderly

(Mr. Olgucuk, Turkey)

international relations. Perpetrators of these heinous acts are assisted by the illegal flow of arms. We believe that multilateral disarmament efforts, including those in the CD, cannot and should not ignore this new form of the use of force with the support of clandestine and massive transfers of arms.

To conclude, we believe that the FMCT and APLs offer the CD the opportunity of making tangible progress in its work this year. We hope this opportunity will not be allowed to slip away.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Turkey for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now call on the representative of Belgium, Ambassador Mernier.

Mr. MERNIER (Belgium) (translated from French): Mr. President, since my delegation is taking the floor for the first time this session, allow me first of all to congratulate you on taking up the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament.

For several years, Belgium has been profoundly aware of the humanitarian crisis caused by the proliferation of anti-personnel landmines. In this regard it takes pride in having been the first to adopt radical measures at the national level totally banning the production, stockpiling and use of and trade in these devices. Obviously, Belgium is in favour of any initiative of any kind which would foster a similar complete ban on anti-personnel landmines at the international level. Thus, it supported General Assembly resolution 51/45 S, a logical stance fully consistent with the joint action of the European Union, which "is committed to the goal of the total elimination of anti-personnel landmines and shall work actively towards the achievement at the earliest possible date of an effective international agreement to ban these weapons worldwide".

In July 1995 our Foreign Minister, Mr. Erik Derycke, who at the time was chairing the Conference on Demining here in Geneva, launched the idea of negotiations on APL mines at the Conference on Disarmament. This proposal is still on the table, and Belgium will always foster anything that could, to a greater or lesser degree, lead to its realization. In this spirit we accepted the proposal for the appointment of a special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines. As it stands, this proposal does not prejudge the terms of reference for the negotiations that could be undertaken. But for Belgium it goes without saying that in the context of the Conference on Disarmament too it is a total ban on anti-personnel mines which is the goal.

At the moment, we are being faced with the difficulties of all kinds encountered in the CD in connection with the launching of negotiations for a complete ban on anti-personnel landmines. Everything points to the fact that these difficulties will not be eliminated quickly, a state of affairs recognized with disappointment and regret by many delegations, including mine. The humanitarian crisis calls for a rapid response by the international community. We are convinced that this response could come from the Ottawa Process. Belgium supports this process unreservedly. It intends to contribute to it in a manner which is commensurate with its commitment and its conviction. That is why, when the Process was launched in December 1996, my

(Mr. Mernier, Belgium)

Government offered to organize a follow-up conference in Brussels in June 1997, a kind of mid-point conference. I am instructed to inform the Conference on Disarmament of this meeting, which is now imminent. The countries interested in a complete ban on APL mines will meet in Brussels from 24 to 27 June 1997. Very extensive participation - quantitatively impressive, geographically representative of the scope of the problem and the interest attached to its solution - is already assured.

My country intends above all to move this process forward in practical terms. First of all it plans to do so through the adoption of a formal declaration which will unambiguously stake out the limits and objectives of the future negotiations - in other words, the salient features of the planned treaty. This will be first and foremost what paragraph 1 of resolution 51/45 S calls "an effective, legally binding international agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines". The same declaration will announce the resolve of the participants to meet again at a diplomatic conference in Oslo next September for the final negotiation of this text on the already solid basis of work coordinated by Austria. In that regard I wish to pay tribute to the contributions made by Austria and Norway. Another fundamental element in this declaration is the confirmation of the resolve of the participants to complete this task before the end of 1997. The number of countries that will subscribe to this declaration will provide what I might call arithmetical proof of the credibility of the process and its vitality. This political declaration has been distributed in every capital, and therefore everyone is familiar with it.

Above and beyond these tangible contributions, the Brussels Conference is intended to maintain and broaden the already very extensive political support the process enjoys. It will be informed, inter alia, of the many recent regional initiatives to combat APL mines. Several eminent personalities will also have an opportunity to express their views on certain specific aspects, including the military usefulness of mines, demining or assistance to victims.

This is the message that I was asked to bring to the Conference on Disarmament. The urgent need to find a solution to the APL mine crisis is my country's sole motivation in this matter. Belgium will support any initiative which enables this objective to be attained in the context of the Conference on Disarmament as well. It will spare no effort to secure this total ban which the situation demands.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Belgium for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. The representative of Kenya has asked for the floor.

Mrs. TOLLE (Kenya): Mr. President, allow me to express my delegation's appreciation for the manner in which you are conducting our work. Let me also pay tribute to your predecessor, the distinguished Ambassador of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Berdennikov, for having spared no effort in trying to ensure that there is progress within the Conference on Disarmament.

(Mrs. Tolle, Kenya)

I have asked for the floor today in my capacity as Coordinator of the Group of 21. The Group of 21 is committed to see the work of the Conference on Disarmament commence immediately, and it is in this connection that the Group wishes to table a programme of work for the Conference for the 1997 session, which reads as follows:

"1. The Conference on Disarmament decides to establish:

"I. An ad hoc committee for agenda item 1, 'Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament'.

"II. An ad hoc committee for agenda item 3, 'Prevention of an arms race in outer space'.

"III. An ad hoc committee for agenda item 4, 'Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons'.

"2. The Conference decides to appoint a special coordinator to seek the views of its members on agenda item 6, 'Comprehensive programme of disarmament', with special reference to the issue of anti-personnel landmines.

"3. The Conference also decides to appoint a special coordinator to seek the views of its members on agenda item 7, 'Transparency in armaments'.

"4. The Conference decides further to appoint special coordinators to carry out consultations on the issues of its expansion and agenda as well as improved and effective functioning.

"The Group of 21 continues to attach the highest priority to the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament under agenda item 1.

"The Group of 21 has presented on 14 March 1996 a proposal for the work of the ad hoc committee, as contained in document CD/1388.

"In this context, a specific proposal on a mandate for the ad hoc committee will be presented in the near future."

It is the desire of the Group of 21 that this document be circulated as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament and that this proposal be considered in open-ended informal consultations immediately after this plenary meeting.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Kenya for her statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. The representative of South Africa is asking for the floor. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. GOOSEN (South Africa): I regret that my Ambassador had to leave for another engagement and I consequently make the following statement on his behalf.

I extend my delegation's congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I also use this opportunity to welcome all of our new colleagues who have joined us in the Conference, and to thank the distinguished Foreign Minister of Russia for his important statement.

I have asked for the floor to make my delegation's position clear on the proposal for a programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament which was presented to us today by the Coordinator of the Group of 21. My delegation has agreed to this proposal for the CD's programme of work in a spirit of solidarity with the Group of 21, and because it deals with some issues which are very important to my country. There is also a very urgent need for the Conference to utilize every opportunity in its attempt to break the deadlock which has faced us since January.

As we, however, made clear in the Group of 21 during its negotiations on this proposal, our agreement to its presentation does not reflect a change in the South African Government's positions and policies on nuclear disarmament, and also not on our opposition to the establishment of "linkages" between any of the work which the Conference needs to undertake. Furthermore, it is incumbent upon me to state that the South African Government remains firmly committed to the proposals which it made on security assurances at the 1997 Preparatory Committee meeting for the 2000 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). We expect that, in accordance with the formal statement made by the Chairman of the 1997 PrepCom, specific time will be made available at the 1998 meeting to give more substantive consideration to this issue. The authorities in South Africa are currently reviewing their views on security assurances in the context of the proposals made at the 1997 PrepCom. My delegation's agreement to the introduction of the proposed programme of work by the Group of 21 should therefore not be seen as in any way changing the position which we adopted at the NPT PrepCom or our eventual position on the negotiations which will surround the proposal to establish an ad hoc committee for agenda item 4, "Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons".

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of South Africa for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair.

As you know, intensive consultations are going on, both within groups as well as between groups, on the proposal to appoint a special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines as well as on the Conference's programme of work as a whole on the basis of all the proposals that have been submitted. I am in a position to inform you that during the Presidential consultations yesterday afternoon, I detected a will to continue the open-ended informal consultations

(The President)

concerning the programme of work of the Conference. Consequently, I propose that these consultations should be continued this afternoon in this room at 3.30 p.m. In response to the request made by the Coordinator of the Group of 21, everything will of course be done to ensure that this document becomes an official document of the Conference.

The Republic of Korea is asking for the floor. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. HWANG (Republic of Korea): On behalf of the Western Group I would like to propose that the open-ended informal consultations take place after 4 p.m. because another meeting is scheduled for the Western Group at 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the Republic of Korea. If there is no objection, I think that we can grant his request and hold the informal consultations this afternoon at 4 p.m. Would any other delegation like to take the floor at this stage?

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will take place on Thursday, 12 June at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.